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QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 3rd plenary meeting, on 22 September 1995, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its fiftieth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information" and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

2. The Fourth Committee considered the item at its 9th to 11th meetings, on 26 and 27 October 1995 (see A/C.4/50/SR.9-11).

3. The Fourth Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Committee on Information; 1/

(b) Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/462).

4. At the 9th meeting, on 26 October, the representative of Algeria, the Rapporteur of the Committee on Information, introduced the report of the Committee and the draft proposals contained therein. 2/

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/50/21).

2/ Ibid., paras. 52 and 53.

5. At the same meeting, the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information made an introductory statement on the activities of the Department of Public Information.

6. At the 11th meeting, on 27 October, the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information made a concluding statement.

II. CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS A AND B AND THE DRAFT DECISION CONTAINED IN PARAGRAPHS 52 AND 53 OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION 1/

7. At its 11th meeting, on 27 October, the Committee adopted, without a vote, draft resolutions A and B and the draft decision contained in paragraphs 52 and 53 of the report of the Committee on Information 1/ (see paras. 8 and 9).

III. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE (FOURTH COMMITTEE)

8. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

DRAFT RESOLUTION A

Information in the service of humanity

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information, 3/

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information, 4/

Urges all countries, organizations of the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, deeply concerned by the disparities existing between developed and developing countries and the consequences of every kind arising from those disparities that affect the capability of the public, private or other media and individuals in developing countries to disseminate information and communicate their views and their cultural and ethical values through

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3/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/50/21).

4/ A/50/462.

endogenous cultural production, as well as to ensure the diversity of sources and their free access to information, and recognizing the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been termed "a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process":

(a) To cooperate and interact with a view to reducing existing disparities in information flows at all levels by increasing assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for their needs and the priorities attached to such areas by those countries, and in order to enable them and the public, private or other media in developing countries to develop their own information and communication policies freely and independently and increase the participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and to ensure a free flow of information at all levels;

(b) To ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them;

(c) To provide support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from public, private and other media in developing countries;

(d) To enhance regional efforts and cooperation among developing countries, as well as cooperation between developed and developing countries, to strengthen communication capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and communication technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information;

(e) To aim, in addition to bilateral cooperation, at providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and their media, public, private or other, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including:

(i) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(ii) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and their media, public, private or other, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(iii) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

(iv) The facilitation, as appropriate, of access by the developing countries to advanced communication technology available on the open market;

(f) To provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication 5/ of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which should support both public and private media.

Draft resolution B

United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming its primary role in elaborating, coordinating and harmonizing United Nations policies and activities in the field of information,

Also reaffirming that the Secretary-General should ensure that the activities of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, as the focal point of the public information tasks of the United Nations, are strengthened and improved, keeping in view the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the priority areas defined by the General Assembly and the recommendations of the Committee on Information,

Taking note of all the reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the Committee on Information,

1. Welcomes Belize, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Kazakstan, and South Africa following the establishment of a united, non-racial and democratic Government in that country, to membership in the Committee on Information;

2. Decides to consolidate the role of the Committee on Information as its main subsidiary body mandated to make recommendations relating to the work of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat;

3. Calls upon the Secretary-General, in respect of the public information policies and activities of the United Nations, to implement fully the recommendations contained in paragraph 2 of resolution 48/44 B of 10 December 1993;

4. Requests the Secretary-General, in order to put into practice the need for an effective public information capacity of the Department of Public Information for the formation and day-to-day functioning of the information components of peace-keeping and other field operations of the United Nations, to ensure the involvement of the Department at the planning stage of such future

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5/ See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Records of the General Conference, Twenty-first Session, Belgrade, 23 September to 28 October 1980, vol. I, Resolutions, sect. III.4, resolution 4/21.

operations through interdepartmental consultations and coordination with the other substantive departments of the Secretariat;

5. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General regarding the continuous and major publications of the Department of Public Information 6/ and urges all efforts to ensure timely production and dissemination of its major publications, in particular the UN Chronicle, the Yearbook of the United Nations and Africa Recovery, maintaining consistent editorial independence and accuracy, and taking the necessary measures to ensure that its output contains adequate, objective and equitable information about issues before the Organization, reflecting divergent opinions wherever they occur;

6. Requests the Secretary-General to increase his efforts for the early resumption of the publication Development Forum, or an alternative system-wide publication that meets the requirements set out for new publications by the Committee on Information;

7. Requests the management of the Department of Public Information to review the Department's publications and proposals for publications to ensure that all publications fulfil an identifiable need, that they do not duplicate other publications inside or outside the United Nations system and that they are produced in a cost-effective manner, and to report to the Committee on Information at its eighteenth session;

8. Reaffirms the importance attached by Member States to the role of United Nations information centres in effectively and comprehensively disseminating information, particularly in developing countries and countries in transition, about United Nations activities;

9. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the results of the trial of integrating United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme, 7/ and invites the Secretary-General to continue the integration exercise whenever feasible, on a case-by-case basis, while taking into account the views of the host country, and ensuring that the information functions and autonomy of the United Nations information centres are not adversely affected, and to report to the Committee on Information;

10. Reaffirms the role of the General Assembly in relation to the opening of new United Nations information centres and invites the Secretary-General, as well, to make such recommendations as he may judge necessary regarding the establishment and location of these centres;

11. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the allocation of resources to United Nations information centres in 1994 8/ and calls upon him

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6/ A/AC.198/1995/3.

7/ A/AC.198/1995/5.

8/ A/AC.198/1995/2.

to continue to study ways and means to rationalize and effect equitable disbursement of available resources to all United Nations information centres and to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its eighteenth session;

12. Welcomes the action by some Member States with regard to financial and material support to United Nations information centres in their respective capitals;

13. Welcomes the successful conclusion of the negotiations on the establishment of a United Nations information component at Warsaw;

14. Notes the progress made by the Secretary-General and the German authorities towards establishing, within existing resources of the Department of Public Information, a United Nations information centre at Bonn;

15. Notes with appreciation the action taken, or being taken, by the Secretary-General regarding the reactivation and enhancement of the United Nations information centres at Bujumbura, Dar es Salaam, Dhaka and Tehran;

16. Welcomes the continued enhanced cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the University for Peace in Costa Rica as a focal point for promoting United Nations activities and disseminating United Nations information materials;

17. Takes note of the requests of Bulgaria, Gabon, Guinea, Haiti and Slovakia for information centres or information components;

18. Expresses its full support for the wide and prompt coverage of United Nations activities through a continuation of United Nations press releases in both working languages of the Secretariat, namely, English and French, and welcomes the improvements in the quality and speedy issue of those press releases in both working languages;

19. Encourages the Secretary-General to explore ways and means to improve the access of United Nations radio to airwaves world wide, bearing in mind that radio is one of the most cost-effective and far-reaching media available to the Department of Public Information and is an important instrument in United Nations activities with regard to development and peace-keeping;

20. Notes with appreciation the efforts of the Department of Public Information to take advantage of recent developments in information technology in order to improve the dissemination of information on the United Nations and encourages the Department to continue its efforts in this field;

21. Notes the important role the Department of Public Information will have to play in responding to the increased public interest resulting from the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, and requests the Department to ensure the greatest possible access for United Nations guided tours, as well as to ensure that displays in public areas are kept as informative, up to date and relevant as possible;

22. Invites Member States that wish to do so to submit to the Secretary-General by 15 March 1996 their observations and suggestions on ways and means of furthering the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with a view to consolidating recent experience in the field of international cooperation aimed at enabling them to develop their own information and communication capacities freely and independently, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its eighteenth session;

23. Recommends, in order to continue to facilitate contact between the Department of Public Information and the Committee on Information between sessions, that the Bureau of the Committee, together with representatives of each regional group, the Group of 77 and China, in close contact with the members of the Committee, should meet on a regular basis and consult at periodic intervals with representatives of the Department;

24. Takes note of the request of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine concerning information activities for the tenth anniversary in 1996 of the Chernobyl disaster and calls upon the Department of Public Information to continue cooperation with the countries concerned, and with the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, with a view to establishing and implementing such activities as appropriate, and within existing resources;

25. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its eighteenth session, in 1996, and to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, in 1996, on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution;

26. Decides that the next session of the Committee on Information should last not more than ten working days, and invites the Bureau of the Committee to explore ways and means of making optimum use of the Committee's time;

27. Requests the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session;

28. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-first session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".

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9. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) also recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decision:

DRAFT DECISION

Increase in the membership of the Committee on Information

The General Assembly decides to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 88 to 89 members and to appoint the Democratic People's Republic of Korea a member of the Committee on Information.